



ILLINOIS FAMILIES Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

Department of Children and Family Services®



From the DCFS Director

Bryan Samuels

Now that fewer than 18,000 youth are in DCFS care, we have the opportunity to focus more attention on preparing youth for adulthood. Whether the ultimate end is reunification, adoption or independence, it is imperative that this agency help youth move to eventual self-sufficiency as productive adults.

This summer, 30 youth in care were in the Find Your Future internship program. Through the generosity of many organizations these students were able to experience the workplace. In eight weeks time they learned priceless life skills.

This was a new program for DCFS, but you, as dedicated caregivers provide "on-the-job" training each day. As you parent, you transfer skills by example. DCFS is putting in place more initiatives to enhance what you do. Our ongoing emphasis on education and employment will complement your efforts. Together, we will see the benefits of our mutual investment in our young people.

DCFS awards scholarships to 48 college students

DCFS again had the happy occasion to send 48 students off to college in grand style. The Walter and Connie Payton Foundation sponsored the July luncheon celebration for the 2005 DCFS Scholarship recipients.

The award ceremony took place at Mike Ditka's Restaurant in Chicago. Nearly all of the recipients from communities across the state were able to make the trip. The day began with an orientation to the scholarship program. Perhaps the most important information was news of a four-year waiver of tuition and fees at the nine



Connie Payton, of the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation, offered inspiration as well as a delicious meal to the scholarship recipients.

participating Illinois universities, a monthly stipend of \$444 and continued medical coverage.

Continued on page 2

The 2005 DCFS Scholarship Award recipients are:

Mary Abbinanti
Jonathan Adams
Eric Albrecht
Ricky Alfonso
Sherlise Barksdale
Jennifer Bergdahl
Jonathan Blout
Jalayne Brewton
William Brown
Bethany Carroll
Tyla Conerly
Jessica Copeland
Jessica Cotton
Megan Coupe
Nina Dixon
John Dowhamyla
Leonard Easley

Marilyn Eason
Rebekah Ehrich
Gabriel Emerick
Kyle Franklin
Michael Gamble
Joseph Glenn
Anita Gomez
Tiffany Hill
Angel Holloway
Adrienne Jackson
Paul Jones
Catherine Kue
Dajah Lindsey
Real Mason
Jon Pierre Matthews-
Edwards
Jennifer Morrow

Jennifer Nance
Chadd Ori
Katie Powell-Strawbridge
Amanda Probasco
Raushawn Reed
Victoria Rodriguez
Shennell Rowe
Christopher Smith
Justin Snyder
Cher Taylor
Tiffany Taylor
Aneesha Toliver
Demetrius Wade
Denishia Yearby
Aaron Zuercher

Scholarship awards, con't.

More than 200 students applied for the 48 scholarships. The recipients were selected based on academic achievement, community involvement and their personal essays.

“To succeed in school after overcoming serious obstacles says everything about how dedicated these kids are to their futures,” stated Gov. Blagojevich prior to the event.

Joining the audience at the event were proud parents, caregivers and staff. DCFS Director Bryan Samuels, Deputy Director Cynthia Moreno of the Division of Service Intervention, DCFS Director of Communications Diane Jackson and Mrs. Connie Payton all had encouraging words for the students.

“Our foundation salutes these talented scholars, and we know that the financial investment and moral support given will pay great dividends in developing tomorrow’s leaders,” said Payton.

With the balloons behind them and the books ahead, the students are focused again on academics. They must maintain a C average with a full-time schedule to continue to receive the scholarship benefits. DCFS Education Advisors are ready to help, along with the other supportive adults who wish them well.

The DCFS Scholarship program is administered by the Office of Education and Transition Services in the Division of Service Intervention. For more information call 312-814-5959.



DCFS Director Bryan Samuels and Connie Payton are surrounded by the scholarship recipients, who are eager to embark on their next educational milestone.

Movin' On Up

A column for teens transitioning to adulthood

More than 600 youth in care are working hard in college. The Care Package Program is ready for a second year of encouraging students as they continue their education. The program is open to adult volunteers who would like to build a relationship and set up regular contact with a college student.

Volunteers will be paired with a student and will receive information on his or her needs and preferences. The volunteers must then be dedicated to sending monthly packages of snacks, supplies and even personal items that often get squeezed out of a student's tight budget. Volunteers can also send letters and remember birthdays and finals weeks.

“Our students who are still in DCFS care should receive care packages from someone special, just like other students,” said program coordinator Roberta Valdez. “The beauty of this program is that the volunteers can get as much enjoyment as the recipient.”

To volunteer or learn more, contact Roberta Valdes in the DCFS Division of Service Intervention at 312-814-5013 or rvaldes@idcfs.state.il.us

Integrated Assessment Program and caregivers

Operating under the premise that you can't really fix a problem without understanding what needs to be fixed, DCFS launched the Integrated Assessment Program. Now, across the state, as a child comes into care, a specially trained clinical screener works with the caseworker to complete a thorough assessment of the child and the family. The assessment looks at the medical, social, emotional/behavioral, educational and developmental aspects of the child and family. That assessment then becomes the basis for the child's service plan. The Integrated Assessment process employs a brand new set of tools and also involves foster parents in new ways.

The first difference that a foster parent may experience is with the Comprehensive Health Examination (CHE). The CHE must occur in 21 days from when a new case is opened for a child. The HealthWorks lead agency will call the foster parent to set an appointment for the CHE. The Department has trained certain doctors in the new examination procedures. Thus, it is imperative that foster parents take a child to the appointment set up by the HealthWorks lead agency. After this exam, foster parents can take the child to the doctor of their choice for other medical needs.

Secondly, the hands-on expertise of the foster parents is a valuable component to the assessment and planning process. Along with

interviewing the child and his family, the clinical screener will also conduct an interview with the foster parents. This interview is a chance to share information about the child in care. It will also identify the foster parent's strengths for providing care to the child and any resources that may be needed. This interview typically will take place in the foster parent's home at a time convenient to the foster parent. At the end of the 45-day assessment, the foster parent is invited to participate in the Family Meeting, where the IA results are presented and the service plan is discussed.

Finally, in the past, foster parents were provided limited information about a child before placement. Under the new approach, the IA team will obtain a more complete clinical understanding of a child's needs faster. In turn, the caregiver has more information and gets it sooner. This helps the foster parent provide the type of care that will help that individual child. In the critical time period at the start of a case, everyone should be better off by building as strong a foundation as possible from the start.

Questions about Integrated Assessment can be directed to the Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development at 312-814-4153.

Family fun at the Illinois State Fair

The Illinois State Fair once again welcomed DCFS foster, adoptive and guardianship families for fun at the fair. The DCFS tent was the place to be for a cool drink, a family photo and plenty of information on programs and services. DCFS families enjoyed benefits of discount admission, coupons for refreshments and reduced price rides and attractions. In addition to the fun, an important safety issue was also addressed. Youth who came to the fair with their parents could get their picture taken to have on file in case they were ever to go missing.

"We always have a great time with our families at the fair and look forward to making it a special event. At the same time we can provide a valuable safety service," said Director Bryan Samuels.

More than 1,500 families took advantage of the special invitation to the Illinois State Fair this year.



Youth from DCFS enjoy popcorn and conversation with Director Bryan Samuels.

Caregivers Institutes returning

The Caregivers Institutes presented earlier this year proved so successful that they are planned again for next year—in more locations. Coming in spring of 2006, the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services will coordinate nine individual day-long trainings to give foster, adoptive and guardianship parents specific tools and resources to help as they care for DCFS youth. The theme this time is “Effecting Transitions—Resources for Caregivers and Youth.”

“We got such positive feedback from the caregivers last year that we were compelled to do it again on a broader scale,” said Velma Williams, Deputy Director, Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development.

A cross-divisional work group is making plans now to hold sessions in two Cook County locations, two Northern Region sites, three Central Region locations and two sites in Southern Region. The objective is to make the sessions more convenient and to better meet local needs.

Meanwhile, look for more information on the Caregivers Institutes in each future issue of this newsletter.



Statewide Council celebrates 10 years of the Foster Parent Law

Years of perseverance, experience, frustration and love for children all culminated in the passage of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights. On June 3, 1995, in front of 500 foster parents gathered for a conference in Peoria, the Foster Parent Law was signed. It stated the rights and the responsibilities of foster parents. The law also mandated that the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council manage implementation of the law. Now, 10 years later that law still serves as a guidepost for serving foster children and foster parents, and the Council still ensures that the law is followed.



Adrienne Welenc chairs the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. The Council is responsible for managing the implementation of the Foster Parent Law.

“The Foster Parent Bill of Rights is still important today. The children in care have changed, and agencies come and go, but the basic rights and responsibilities have to be maintained,” said Adrienne Welenc, chair of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council.

The warriors who fought for the Foster Parent Law included many individual advocates and organizations. Some of the faces have changed, but many continue to take up the cause. The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council has grown into its mission to uphold the basic tenets of the Law. Each year, agencies and DCFS regions submit Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans to the Office of Foster Parent Support Services. This Office provides staff and support to help the Council complete its work in accordance to the Law. The Council also regularly monitors agencies to make sure that aspects of the plan are actually utilized in the service families receive.

Foster parents should keep the rights and responsibilities contained in the law at the forefront of discussions with agencies and DCFS. The 14 rights and 17 responsibilities capture the essence of cooperation and quality care for children. Since foster care programs must be grounded in the Foster Parent Law, the document is a good jumping off point for resolving disputes and finding solutions. A synopsis of the Law follows on the next page. The full text of the Law is included in the Foster Parent Handbook, section 8. Questions about the Foster Parent Law can be directed to the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

Foster Parent Rights

Foster parents have the right to...

1. Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration.
2. Be provided pre-service and ongoing training to meet needs and improve skills.
3. Be informed on how to contact the placement agency for assistance to access support services.
4. Receive timely financial reimbursement for care included in the service plan.
5. Be provided with information about the agency's plan for placement, that includes supporting family relationships and cultural heritage.
6. Be provided fair, timely and impartial investigations, including mediation and/or administrative review and explanations of decisions concerning licensing.
7. Receive additional or necessary information relevant to the child's care at any time.
8. Be notified of scheduled meetings concerning the child. Be informed of decisions. To have input on the plan of service. To communicate with other professionals.
9. Have any information the caseworker has about the child and his family that pertains to the child's needs and care.
10. Receive written notice of any changes in the case plan or plans to end placement, along with the reason.
11. Receive timely notification of court hearings.
12. Be considered as a placement option for foster children formerly in their care.
13. Have access to an agency's or DCFS's appeals process without retaliation.
14. Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and information on reporting staff misconduct.

Foster Parent Responsibilities

Foster parents have the responsibility to...

1. Openly communicate and share information about the child with the child welfare team.
2. Respect the confidentiality of information about foster children and their families.
3. Advocate for children in their care.
4. Treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration.
5. Recognize their own strengths, limitations and support needs when considering whether to accept placement of a child.
6. Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent groups in improving the quality of care.
7. Assess their on-going individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.
8. Develop and implement strategies to prevent placement disruptions, and to provide support if preventative strategies fail and disruption occurs.
9. Know the impact that foster parenting has on individuals and the family and minimize the resulting stress as much as possible.
10. Know the rewards and benefits of foster parenting and promote the experience in a positive way.
11. Know the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other child welfare professionals, the child and the child's family.
12. Know their role as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse/neglect. Know the policy regarding allegations against foster parents.
13. Understand the purpose of and participate in administrative case reviews, service plans and court processes, according to their designated role.
14. Know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and their rights.
15. Maintain accurate and relevant records regarding the child's progress and history and follow agency procedures and regulations.
16. Share information about the child's adjustment with a subsequent caregiver, whether it be the parent or another substitute caregiver.
17. Respect and maintain a child's cultural needs and support relationships with his own family.



Grandparents raising grandkids have special needs for services

Grandparents in Illinois are raising 213,000 grandchildren, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The living arrangements could be informal, a placement through DCFS or adoption or guardianship. Whatever the case, grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are often in a complicated parental role. While a child's caseworker can help, the older adult caregiver can also find resources through the Illinois Department on Aging.

"Illinois ranks fifth in the nation in the number of grandparents responsible for their grandkids. The number one reason is drugs, pure and simple," said Barbara Schwartz, Barbara Schwartz, Statewide Coordinator for the Illinois Department on Aging.

Other factors include neglect/abuse, the death of a parent, HIV/AIDS, divorce, unemployment/poverty, parental incarceration, teen pregnancy and welfare reform.

Schwartz said that grandparents raising another generation of children face many obstacles. Her office fields many calls from older caregivers who need support. The common issues are:

- Financial assistance
- Housing
- Special education
- Child care
- Legal assistance
- School enrollment
- Visitation concerns



The Illinois Department on Aging maintains a 24-hour Senior Parent Hotline to help answer questions, make referrals and find solutions. The toll-free phone number is 888-727-5889. Volunteers who staff the phone line talk to more than 100 seniors each month. In addition to the statewide line, there are 13 Area Agencies on Aging, representing different regions of the state. Each area agency has local programs and contacts to provide services to caregivers 60 years old and older. An area agency could help if a senior parent needed temporary homemaker assistance after a hospitalization, as one example.

There are also programs to help with transportation to medical appointments for the parent and also the child in care. Caregivers can get help with creating wills and other legal processes. Services and supports vary among localities. Contact information on the area agencies is available through the Senior Hotline or the Department on Aging web site: www.state.il.us/aging.

Help for Chicago's elder caregivers

The Older Caregiver Project of Metropolitan Family Services is now available to assist all Chicago senior caregivers. As of July 1, the program expanded from select zip codes to the entire city.

The Older Caregiver Program is designed to help foster, adoptive and guardianship families face the aging issues that can arise for older caregivers. The program is for caregivers 60 years or older with a child in their care.

Services include:

- Comprehensive home-based assessment of the caregivers' and children's needs using a multidisciplinary approach
- Linkage to resources in the aging network and other community resources
- Advance planning for children, using family mediation to cultivate extended family support and prepare for the possibility of the caregiver's incapacity or death
- Financial and housing consultation
- Coordination with child welfare providers, medical and clinical professionals

Caregivers can call the intake number at 773-884-2235 for more information or for a referral.



New community resources for education available

Recognizing that education deficiencies can be the biggest stumbling block to eventual self-sufficiency, DCFS turned its eye to the Local Area Network (LAN) system. The LANs unite local agencies and efforts to provide family strengthening services in communities. This year, DCFS requested that agencies providing Family Centered Services programs shift their focus to education. Now, more than 100 providers among the LANs are offering services for youth at risk of truancy, expulsion or suspension. These programs are for the community at large. Thus, children who have moved to adoption or guardianship and are not in DCFS care can take advantage of the extra help.

Each of the LAN providers can tailor their program to meet the needs in their local community. Some of the new programs work with specific schools or target a certain age of student. However, all of the programs must address reducing truancy, expulsion or suspension.

"The programs may have slightly different approaches, but they are all focused on this education initiative. We are looking at this year as an evaluation year. We are committed to continuing the programs that work," said Michael Burns, Statewide LAN Coordinator.

For example, in LAN 21, serving Rock Island, services will be targeted at preparing eighth graders for transition to the high school environment. Providers will offer after school programs and counseling to identified at-risk students. In LAN 80 covering part of Chicago, the Chicago Child Care Association will provide educational assessments for at-risk students and pair them with education coordinators. The coordinators will be the connection between the family, services and the school throughout the year.

Since the offerings vary among LANs, parents, teachers and other adults should contact the DCFS LAN liaison for more details on particular providers. The DCFS contacts listed below can direct you to the assigned liaison for each LAN.

Cook Central

Donna Cain at 773-292-7937

Cook North

Sari Rowitz at 312-328-2484

Cook South

Harold Dixon at 708-210-3060

Outside of Cook County

Judy Rehder at 309-937-1071



Kids' adoption web site

The Adoption Clubhouse at www.AdoptionClubhouse.org is a new web site for children ages eight to 12. It is designed for children whose lives have been touched by adoption and their parents. Children can send "e-cards" to friends and families. The Homework Help section includes interesting facts about adoption. It also gives practical advice on how to handle family-based projects like family trees.

The Famous People section features those who have been adopted and who are adoptive parents. One surprising fact listed was that Christopher Columbus was an adoptive parent to a Native American child who returned to Italy with him.

The Speak Out section features children writing about their own experience. There is also a staffed message board where children can "talk" to other children. The Adoption Clubhouse Library has descriptions and featured reviews of books and movies. A Fun Stuff section offers puzzles, games, and postcards. Another special section will address the concerns of parents and offer suggestions for Internet safety.

Parents and children can view the site, which is sponsored in part by the Dave Thomas Foundation.



Post-Adoption

Hint: School fees after adoption

After an adoption, parents should remember that the “automatic” eligibility for waivers of most school fees for foster children is no longer applicable. A child in foster care is eligible for the federal free lunch program and waivers of activity and book fees. However, once the adoption is finalized, that child is no longer in the care of the state and thus no longer eligible for this funding by virtue of foster care. This also holds true for guardianship cases, since the child becomes a member of the guardian’s household.

Families need to plan accordingly before leaving the foster care system through adoption or guardianship. They may also consider looking for other resources, including applying for fee waivers based on the family’s income. After the move to adoption or guardianship, parents should provide the school with a copy of the legal documents to update the child’s record.

While fee waivers may be hard to give up, adoptive parents and guardians should be prepared rather than surprised. Even with a standing state policy on school fees, there still can be variance among school districts. Questions about school fees can be directed to the legal department of the Illinois State Board of Education at 312-814-2223.



The Post-Adoption/Guardianship Subsidy Unit serves the masses

While the number of foster care cases has declined to under 18,000, the number of families receiving adoption and guardianship subsidies has soared to 41,000. In Cook County alone, the Post Adoption and Guardianship Subsidy Unit must manage more than 31,000 open cases. Just having room for all the files is a daunting task, not to mention the volume of calls that come in each day.

In August almost the entire Cook County staff met with several adoptive parents as a way to open dialogue and foster understanding of how to effectively serve families.

“It was great to have a real face to put to the calls we receive. We appreciated the time that the parents gave and our staff felt like we all benefited,” said June Dorn, Statewide Adoption Coordinator.

The staff had a chance to introduce themselves and explain their basic operations. Primarily the staff has two main components: the office specialists and the child welfare specialists. The office specialists are typically the first point of contact and handle the administrative aspects of the cases. They coordinate correspondence about the subsidy when it is initiated and at points of review or change. The child welfare specialists are responsible for determining the needs and

matching appropriate services in response to family inquiries.

The responsive nature of the unit is perhaps one of the more challenging aspects. After an adoption or move to guardianship, the familiar foster care caseworker is no longer involved. Sometimes that can be viewed as a welcome part of the transition to permanency. However, changes come as children grow, and problems can arise after adoption.

Often families have questions about medical coverage when moving out of state or finding a therapist as a youth’s emotional needs change. There is usually a spike in calls as the youth approaches the eighteenth birthday and the end of the subsidy payment. The best advice is to call early, before hitting the crisis point. The staff is committed to finding the best solution for the child and the family.

Questions about post-adoption and guardianship issues in Cook County can be directed to the toll-free number 866-538-8892. Outside of Cook County, there are subsidy workers in each DCFS regional office.



News from the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council (IAAC) last met August 12. The agenda addressed many of the Council's core issues, including training and services.

Adoption Training

One major initiative for the Adoption Advisory Council is to help ensure that child welfare staff have adoption-specific skills and that adoptive parents have needed training. The Council has made progress on both fronts. Members served on the curriculum committee to rewrite the Adoption Core Training for caseworkers. The training is due to be offered later this year for DCFS workers and private agency staff who work with adoptions. The new 21-day curriculum combines classroom teaching with in-the-field and online assignments. The intent is to enable staff to put the new skills into play directly with current cases.

The Council is also going to be a part the curriculum committee for the retooled adoption conversion training. This class is currently offered to foster parents as they make the shift to adoption for a child already placed in their home. DCFS is now in the process of modifying the training to keep it in line with new policies and relevant to the needs of children and potential adoptive parents.

Post-Adoption Services

The IAAC is consulting with The Cradle to develop an on-line resource guide for adoption-related services throughout the state. Council members also met with the Cook County Post-Adoption and Subsidy Unit. The meeting gave the staff and the adoptive parents an opportunity to discuss post-adoption/guardianship issues from both perspectives.

Illinois Celebrates Adoption

Members of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council are volunteering time to the planning committee for the Illinois Celebrates Adoption Day events during National Adoption Awareness Month in November. The committee is still accepting photographs for the state's largest adoption family album. Contact the editor (see information below). Council members are also spearheading a charge to coordinate events statewide. This subcommittee is interested in finding out about Adoption Day events in all parts of the state. Examples are celebrations in local judicial offices, parades to increase awareness or news conferences. Anyone with information on local events can contact the Editor at vjames@idcfs.state.il.us or 312-814-6824 by October 31. That information will be passed to the subcommittee so adoptive parents can speak with a unified voice on November 18.



November adoption conference

The Midwest Adoption Conference will be held on November 13 at William Rainey Harper College in Palatine. The theme for the conference is the Adoption Experience. This conference is put together by Adoptive Families Today, Stars of David and Families with Children from China.

Caregivers licensed through DCFS will find much of interest. It is a conference for those looking to adopt, adoptive families and other triad members, foster families and professionals. The conference will offer training opportunities in many aspects of adoption including:

- General Parenting Topics
- International Adoption
- Legal Issues in Adoption
- Domestic Adoption
- Parenting Children with Challenges
- Issues Unique to Pre-Adoption
- Post Adoption Services and Resources
- Adoption and the Schools
- Race and Culture in Adoption
- Teen Issues
- Therapeutic Issues
- Single or Gay/Lesbian Adoption
- Openness in Adoption
- Advocacy and Public Policy
- Fostering
- Search and Reunion

For more information or to register go to the conference link at www.adoptivefamielstoday.org.

Tell it like it is: Readers respond

Families Now and Forever wants to hear the “real deal” on caring for children from those who know best. Here’s how readers responded to the question: **What was your last child welfare problem and how was it successfully resolved?**

I am an adoptive parent of three. When my children reached their teenage years, they developed problematic behaviors that were more than I could handle alone. I called my adoption worker at DCFS and was told that I needed to find local resources. When that failed, I worked my way up through the chain of command at DCFS. I was able to get assistance from an agency in Springfield that provided exactly the services we needed.

Adoptive parent, Taylorville

I adopted my grandchildren when they were little. Later I became sick and was hospitalized for a long time. I went back to DCFS but they could not help me. There was no more caseworker. I called other state departments who promised to get back to me but never did. Fortunately, I had my adult children who could help take care of the younger ones. I don’t know what I would have done without them, since there was no one else to help.

Adoptive Grandmother, Chicago

Editor’s note: Information for grandparents raising grandchildren is on page 6 of this issue.

My son got into trouble at school and the principal said he would have to transfer schools, after serving a lengthy suspension. I called an education advisor for help. This was a great school and I hoped we could work it out. With the advisor and a district representative, I learned that a transfer could not be enforced at that point. We concluded that the better plan would be to beef up the behavior interventions in his IEP. The DCFS Education Advisor was really good about making sure the school knew the plan and followed it. My son kept his nose clean for the rest of the year and is looking forward to being a sophomore.

Chicago

The new question is... **What changes do you see coming for your family in 2006?**

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at vjames@idcfs.state.il.us or by phone at 312-814-6824. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Vanessa James
Editor



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A family for me

Maurice [7368] Maurice, 13, is an outgoing young man with a wonderful singing voice and a gift for performing. When he's not singing along to his favorite CDs, he likes to express himself at the art table. He enjoys drawing and sketching, and often creates designs for new clothes.

His worker said Maurice has a good sense of humor. His teacher said Maurice is imaginative and can be very friendly. The family for Maurice would give him lots of love and attention. Maurice said he would like a family that will love and accept him for who he is.

Joseph [7510] Joseph, 11, is an active young man who is talented at baseball and softball, and he can spend hours playing these sports. When he's not on the baseball diamond, he is often swimming laps or wrestling with friends. In addition to his athletic skills, Joseph has proven to be a good reader, and he does well in school. He has a pleasant personality and is mature and insightful for his age. In his free time, he collects Yu-Gi-Oh cards and goes skateboarding. His foster parent and teacher said that Joseph is a bright child who responds well to people he trusts. His worker reports that Joseph is eager to join an adoptive home. To be a parent to Joseph, you can be loving and kind, and you can give him lots of praise for a job well done. Joseph would like to join a family that lives in the country and has another child around his age. He would also like to remain in contact with his

siblings and maternal grandparents after he is adopted.

Damien [7456] Damien, 6, loves cartoons and children's television shows, especially Barney. When he's not watching his favorite programs, Damien enjoys splashing in the swimming pool and playing with animals. He takes the bus to school each day and always has a good time in gym and music classes. Damien has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair to go from place to place. However, he is starting to walk with a walker and can almost sit up by himself. While Damien isn't verbal, he can express himself through movement, and he smiles for the people he's closest with.

His worker said Damien has made great progress over the past two years. His caregivers want the best for this young man. To be a family for Damien, you can be very patient and loving with Damien. You can make a lifetime commitment to his care.

Amber & Bethany [C7414-15] These sisters would like to join a positive, supportive adoptive family. Amber, 13 (left) is an affectionate young lady who likes to play with Barbie dolls and listen to her CD player. Although she is a little on the shy side, Amber becomes more outgoing when she can dance and sing along with her favorite songs. She enjoys attention and affection and thrives on nurturing and praise. Bethany, 11, (right) is a smart young lady who

receives As and Bs in school. She enjoys learning about tigers, bears, and other wild animals, and she would like to join a family that has a dog or other pets. Bethany loves to go swimming and shopping. Her favorite foods are pizza and ice cream.

Their foster parent said Amber and Bethany behave well and are glad to help around the house. Amber's teacher said she enjoys school and works hard at her assignments. Bethany's worker said she is proud of her room and likes to keep it neat and clean. The right parents for Amber and Bethany can provide lots of love and attention to help them feel secure. You can have the time for close supervision and active parenting. Amber and Bethany will do best with an Illinois family so they can maintain contact with their other siblings.

Quentin [4819] Quentin, 11, is a likeable, affectionate young man who loves to spend time outside. His favorite activities include riding his bike and playing baseball and basketball. Indoors, Quentin enjoys racing matchbox cars and playing with Pokemon cards. He's also a bit of an artist and likes drawing and coloring pictures.

His foster parents said Quentin is "a great kid" who is kind and loving. His worker said Quentin is fun to do things with, and he lights up when he sees someone he likes. Parents for Quentin can be patient, loving, and affectionate. Quentin will benefit from having a predictable home life and a regular routine.

If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org.

Illinois Families Now and Forever
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Chicago, Illinois 60601

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Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.



Maurice [7368]



Joseph [7510]



Damien [7456]



Caregivers Institutes coming this Spring. See page 4.

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Amber & Bethany [C7414-15]



Quentin [4819]

Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.